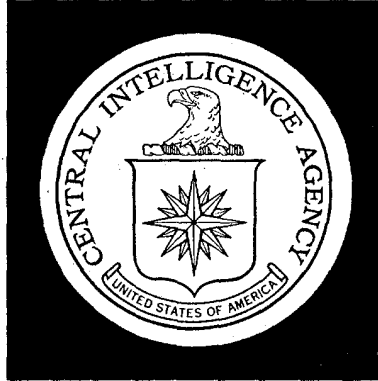


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

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WEEKLY REVIEW

~~Top Secret~~

10 September 1971

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Uruguay: *The Great Escape*

The Tupamaros' spectacular mass prison break on 6 September was a serious political setback for the Pacheco government. The administration's reaction has yet to suggest any new initiatives that might begin to restore the public's now badly undermined confidence in the government.

A total of 111 prisoners, including 106 Tupamaros, tunneled their way to freedom in a characteristically adept terrorist operation. [redacted]

[redacted] stolen vehicles were used to transport the escapees after the nine-hour operation was completed. Almost all of the top leaders of the Tupamaros escaped; some had been in prison for several years.

The government's inability to operate an effective detention system has been obvious for some time. In March of 1970, 13 female Tupamaros were freed. The transfer of responsibility for the prisons from the lax Ministry of Culture to Interior has had little practical effect. A Tupamaro tunneling effort in January was washed out by rains; a simple ruse sufficed to free a Tupamaro leader in July, and later that month 37 female Tupamaros escaped.

The latest breakout left security forces in a state of shock and dismay. In contrast to the reaction to earlier spectacular operations by the terror-

ists, few countermeasures were apparent after this jailbreak. Main roads were not controlled, roadblocks in the capital were not in evidence, and there was little indication of any intensive search efforts. The press has reported government arrests in the wake of the escape, but the administration has not claimed to have recaptured any of the escapees. The resignations of the ministers of interior and defense, and that of the director of prisons, have been offered and at least the latter seems likely to be accepted.

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The government's public response has been pro forma. Official communiqués have re-emphasized the Pacheco administration's determination to hold the general elections scheduled for 28 November, and reiterated its commitment to maintain internal security. The measures set forth include a more active role for the armed forces, the banning of all but government-approved political demonstrations, and a warning to all citizens to carry identification at all times. Most of these controls, however, were being implemented prior to the escape.

The latest government bungle comes just after President Pacheco had announced his intention to run for re-election via a constitutional amendment permitting a second term. This episode all but destroys his prospects for a successful bid [redacted]